

Guitar Syllabus Updates 2026

Introduction

As part of the ongoing development of the LCME Electric, Acoustic, Rock and Bass Guitar syllabuses, the performance requirements have been revised to provide greater choice and flexibility in repertoire selection. Candidates may now select appropriate own-choice repertoire, subject to the requirements specified for each grade.

These options supplement the existing requirements. Candidates preparing for an examination under the previous version of these syllabuses may continue to use them.

The following changes come into effect from **5 October 2026** and apply to Graded exams taken in-person. For Recorded exams, please see the updated [Recorded requirements](#) for each relevant instrument.

Performance guidelines

Own-choice repertoire

Candidates must provide the examiner with a copy of the music for any own-choice piece before the examination begins.

Backing tracks

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that suitable equipment is available at the centre to reproduce audio when required by their chosen option.

Table of Contents

1. Electric Guitar: Steps 1 and 2, Grades 1–8.....	2
2. Rock Guitar: Steps 1 and 2, Grades 1–8.....	3
3. Acoustic Guitar: Steps 1 and 2, Grades 1–8.....	4
4. Bass Guitar: Preliminary Grade, Grades 1–8.....	5

1. Electric Guitar: Steps 1 and 2, Grades 1–8

These changes apply to *Electric Guitar Graded in-person exams* at all levels. For Recorded exams, please see the updated [Recorded requirements](#). Requirements for Recital exams are set out in the updated [Electric Guitar syllabus](#).

Component 3: Rhythm Playing or Performance

Candidates may perform either:

- one Rhythm Playing exercise from the LCME handbook; or
- one piece of the candidate's own choice of a similar standard and duration, which may be a piece set for the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Component 4: Lead Playing or Improvisation

Candidates may perform either:

- a Lead Playing exercise over a chord progression given by the examiner; or
- an improvised section performed over a piece or a backing track of the candidate's own choice. The improvisation must be of the standard required by the grade. An approximate duration per grade is given in the syllabus.

Component 7: Specialism (only Grades 7 & 8)

Option 4: Rhythm Playing or Performance or Lead Playing or Improvisation

Candidates choose one option from Component 3 or Component 4, with own-choice options available in both.

Publications

The digital and physical editions of the Electric Guitar books are available with a 50% discount here: [Digital and physical editions](#)

2. Rock Guitar: Grades 1–8

These changes apply to *Rock Guitar Graded in-person exams* at the specified levels. For Recorded exams, please see the updated [Recorded requirements](#). Requirements for Recital exams are set out in the updated [Rock Guitar syllabus](#).

Grades 1–8

Component 1: Prepared Performance

Candidates may perform either:

- a piece from the provided list; or
- a piece of a similar standard and duration, which may be a piece set for the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Component 3: Additional Performance or Improvisation

Candidates perform an additional free choice piece of a similar standard or an additional prepared improvisation.

Publications

The LCME Rock Guitar handbooks are available for free:

- [Rock Guitar Handbook Step 1 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Step 2 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 1 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 2 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 3 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 4 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 5 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 6 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 7 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Rock Guitar Handbook Grade 8 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Audio downloads \(Step 1&2\)](#)

3. Acoustic Guitar: Steps 1 and 2, Grades 1–8

The following changes apply to *Acoustic Guitar Graded in-person exams* at the specified levels. For Recorded exams, please see the updated [Recorded requirements](#). Requirements for Recital exams are set out in the updated [Acoustic Guitar syllabus](#).

Steps 1 and 2

Component 2: Performance

Candidates perform:

- one rhythm study selected from the LCME exam handbook; and
- two pieces chosen from the exam handbook or two own choice pieces of similar standard and duration, which may be pieces set at the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Grades 1–2

Component 2: Performance

Candidates perform:

- one rhythm study selected from the LCME exam handbook; and
- either one melody or one fingerstyle study. The melody may be chosen from those contained in the exam handbook or be an own choice piece of similar standard and duration, including pieces set at the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Grades 3–5

Component 2: Performance

Candidates perform:

- one rhythm study selected from the LCME exam handbook; and
- one solo piece chosen from those in the exam handbook or an own choice of similar standard and duration, including pieces set at the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Grades 6–8

Component 2: Performance

Candidates perform two pieces. Both pieces may be chosen from the exam handbook or be an own choice of similar standard and duration, including pieces set at the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Publications

The digital and physical editions of the Acoustic Guitar books are available here: [Digital and physical editions](#)

4. Bass Guitar: Preliminary Grade, Grades 1–8

All components of *Bass Graded in-person exams* are included here for ease of reference, however changes have only been made to component 2 and 3 at all levels. For Recorded exams, please see the updated [Recorded requirements](#).

Component 1: Scales and Arpeggios

Candidates perform from memory a set of technical exercises. Find the requirements for each grade in the [Bass Guitar Information Booklet](#).

Component 2: Bass Patterns or Performance

Candidates perform either:

- one Bass Patterns exercise from the [LCME handbook](#) of the grade; or
- one piece of the candidate's own choice of a similar standard and duration, which may be a piece set for the same grade by another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation.

Component 3: Performance

Candidates perform either:

- an improvised bass line over a given chord sequence; or
- an improvised section over a piece or a backing track of the candidate's own choice. The improvisation must be of the standard required by the grade and a similar length to the sequences in the relevant [LCME handbook](#).

Component 4: Musicianship

Candidates respond to questions asked by the examiner. More information on the topics covered in each grade can be found in the relevant [LCME handbook](#).

Component 5: Aural Assessment

Candidates respond to questions set by the examiner. More information on the topics covered in each grade can be found in the relevant [LCME handbook](#).

Component 6: Specialism (only for Grades 6 to 8)

Candidates demonstrate one of the specialism areas of study listed in the [Bass Guitar Information Booklet](#). It may include unaccompanied playing, slap, fretless techniques or sight reading. Find the requirements for each grade in the relevant [LCME handbook](#).

Publications

Further information and examples are provided in the handbook for each level:

- [Bass Early Grades Handbook \(PDF\)](#)
- [Bass Intermediate Grades Handbook \(PDF\)](#)
- [Bass Advanced Grades Handbook \(PDF\)](#)
- [Audio Downloads \(all grades\)](#)